A new Welcome Center is being developed as part of the ongoing Campus Master Plan at the University of Puget Sound. This Welcome Center will be on the North side of campus on Alder Street, and its purpose is to be the “inspiring point of entry for prospective families — a bold, lasting first impression,” according to the University of Puget Sound website.

The Welcome Center is designed to meet the growing needs of prospective students and their families. It will be located at the intersection of N. Alder and N. 15th, according to the school’s website.

In addition to welcoming prospective families to campus, the Welcome Center will also “serve as a contemporary, high-functioning home for our hard-working Office of Admissions,” according to the University’s website.

The webpage estimates a total cost of $4 million, most of which come from donors. The website lists naming opportunities for donors, the lowest of which, a tour or interview room, are priced at $50,000. Its style will be similar to the rest of campus, with “a courtyard, a reception area anchored by a fireplace, and a glass-walled presentation room,” as stated on the University website.

Budgeting for large projects such as these is done by the Budget Task Force (BTF). According to the University of Puget Sound website, the BTF is “charged by the president to develop a recommendation for a balanced operating budget for the coming year. The task force is chaired by the Academic Vice President and includes two students, two faculty, two staff and the Vice President for Finance and Administration.”

The Welcome Center project has been in development since the Campus Master Plan was rolled out in 2003, but the need for it is stronger now than ever, according to Gale McIntosh, the Vice President of Communications and Chief of Staff at the University.

“The Welcome Center is a capital project that has been in progress for many years as part of the University’s master plan for campus development, and addresses many key needs for competitive recruitment of a diverse student body, campus meeting space, and hospitality for the more than 5,000 students and their families who visit campus each year,” McIntosh said. “Students who visit campus are six times more likely to enroll, and we have outgrown our ability to host these large numbers on the first floor of Jones Hall.”

There will also be a need to redefine usage for the first floor of Jones Hall after the new Welcome Center is built.

“The University is currently involved in a space-planning study; results of that work will inform how to best use Jones Hall and other areas of campus to best accommodate the current and future needs of students, faculty and staff,” McIntosh said.

However, there are some reasons to be skeptical of this part of the Campus Master Plan. According to an article written by Jon Marcus of The Atlantic, in 2016, colleges and universities collectively faced a budget shortfall of $30 billion for what they call “deferred maintenance” or “deferred renewal” to campus infrastructure.

“The problem is compounded by the fact that they nonetheless continue to build more — spending a record $11.5 billion last year — in the hope of attracting students at a time when enrollment is leveling off or falling,” Marcus wrote.

This statement may be familiar for some in the University of Puget Sound community, as enrollment for 2017 was lower than usual. While this Welcome Center could be a way to boost enrollment, some community members would rather see the University invest in other resources.

“It is probably a good idea but it seems a bit over-the-top for our campus. What purpose does this serve the campus? As long as we have good community outreach, we don’t need a Welcome Center,” senior Eden Krolopp said.

Community outreach and diversifying the campus community are goals many on campus have been working toward. As previously reported by Zhia Tsui, the class of 2021 has the highest number of local Tacoma enrollers in any class, and 31 percent of the class is students of color.

Krolopp is not the only community member who feels that there is a better use of resources that would make the campus a more appealing place for prospective students.

Professor Monica DeHart of the University’s Sociology and Anthropology department was asked to weigh in on the new Welcome Center, as well as to give thoughts on resources that could be brought to the community.

“I’d love to see us invest in resources that enhance the educational experience. Resources like diverse, engaged teacher-scholars whose work profoundly stretches and supports students’ growth, resources that make our campus welcoming to and inclusive of a wide variety of students; resources that create spaces and moments for true conversation, collaboration, and transformation; resources that ultimately produce more students, faculty and staff who love to be here and are, thus, inspired to tap visiting prospective students on the shoulder and say, ‘Come here. This place is an awesome place to learn!’” DeHart said.

The new University of Puget Sound Welcome Center could be a massive asset to help enroll more students at the University, but there is hope for an alternative: better allocation of resources to directly draw in a group of diverse learners and thinkers.

By Ayden Bolin

UNIVERSITY ALLOCATES RESOURCES TO NEW WELCOME CENTER
Revisions to campus Sexual Misconduct Policy

By Lorraine Kelly

Within the past decade, sexual misconduct cases on campus have come to the forefront of conversation. In the wake of the highly publicized actions of Hollywood celebrities, and the sexual harassment accusations in Hollywood, many individuals have come forward, revealing their own experiences of harassment and assault in various settings, ranging from college campuses to the workplace.

In June 2015, W&GW Student Government began revising its policies against sexual misconduct. In the informational session for the students, Daniel Seniors, the Dean of Students, explained that the original policy did not specifically outline incidents involving faculty and students. She noted that it also included a large amount of information, which created confusion for many campus members. The process of revising was a process of "disentangling the previous policy" to create a more accessible document.

According to Seniors, this new policy has been written in accordance with national policies and within the guidelines of Title IX. Title IX, part of the Education Amendments of 1972, states that "no person in the United States shall be excluded from participation in, or be subjected to discrimination on the basis of sex under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." The policy falls under Title IX in that it impedes access to education by creating an unsafe environment.

Completed in 2017, the new campus policy has been lengthened to include robust definitions of consent, coercion, and harassment. The policy has been split into two parts, one describing the policy itself and another which details the procedure for sexual misconduct violations and accusations for faculty, staff, and students. This policy will be revised annually to ensure campus safety.

These procedures are complaint-driven,"according to Jessica Pence, the Director of Student Conduct, meaning that all proceedings occur in accordance with the wishes of the complainant. Processes are not treated as legal entities, rather, all proceedings go through the Sexual Misconduct Coordinator, whatever the up of trained faculty. The resolutions of these cases are determined by the evidence available at the time. The board takes personal narrative as evidence, which differs from low enforcement tactics.

The procedure also outlines the right to a support person, whose purpose is to provide support, guidance, advice, etc." This person, allowed for both the complainant and the respondent (the individual being accused) may not advocate for either party, but rather, serve as emotional support.

Runbeck said, "When someone who attended the informational meeting, still believes there is some ambiguity surrounding the support person addition because I think it's really important for survivors to have people there for them, but the support person can't say anything or advocate for them, so I was a little confused about the point of that," Gudgel stated.

While these procedures have been clarified, the policy, which allows for more student voices to be heard.

Both the policy and the procedure have been coming from various origins and off campus, including faculty, student groups and outside support groups. This policy is now on the campus website, which also includes an online report form. Reporting through this form may be anonymous and may contain as much or as little of the story as the complainant wishes to tell.

According to the policy's statement of purpose,”This policy is informed by an understanding that sexual misconduct destroys the respect, dignity, and trust necessary to form a vibrant community.” This revised policy creates a standard for our campus community that allows for a safe environment while maintaining transparency between students and campus conduct officials.

Human trafficking prevalent in Seattle-Tacoma area

By Ayden Bolin

The issue of human trafficking in the Pacific- Northwest Region has become a major problem for the region. Human trafficking, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, is the third-largest criminal industry in the world, and it is defined by the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the profit from somebody else's labor or sex acts. This includes anybody under the age of 18 who has been forced to do manual labor or sex work.

According to Jan Runbeck, a faculty member at Tacoma's School of Nursing, human trafficking is often divided into two categories: labor trafficking and sex trafficking. The former of the two mainly happens in factories and agriculture, whereas the latter happens around sex and labor. This type of forced labor can be seen in small businesses such as restaurants, salons and massage parlors as well.

Sex trafficking, on the other hand, is when someone is forced to perform sex acts for the profit of a third party. According to Runbeck, "If a 16-year-old trades sex for a place to sleep at night, then that's considered trafficking," though the person who gave that 16-year-old a place to sleep that night might not have gained money, or 'pimped' the kid, they took advantage of the kid by trading a place to stay.

The project works for the Pierce County Coalition Against Trafficking (PCCAT), a local organization that aims to educate people about human trafficking and how to mitigate the issue. Their mission statement reads, "We are a group who wholeheartedly believe that our community can have human trafficking by raising awareness and taking active steps to prevent it from happening."

"CSEC stands for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. This is our way to prevent it from a public health point of view is to prevent it in the first place," Runbeck said. "Initially, we first became aware of this problem, there was no place to send any victims of trafficking, but the Pierce County Coalition is starting to recognize a problem, and we are starting to come up with resources for victims and help them."

"We are finding the best way to prevent it is from a younger age, teaching educators who are in the field, teach them about child sex," and start classes in high school. "We don't want boys growing up to be buyers or sellers, and we don't want girls growing up to be victims," Runbeck said.

The PCCAT has worked to increase partnerships with other organizations such as churches and other coalitions as well as church groups in the Tacoma area. A big emphasis has also been placed on law enforcement, social workers, health providers and educators to see victims and assist them.

People who are victims of human trafficking are often in vulnerable or oppressed populations. Children, people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ and low-income are the most likely to be targeted by human trafficking rings, according to the PCCAT.

"All children are vulnerable by default. The prefrontal cortex in the brain does not develop fully until 25, so people younger than that cannot fully appreciate consequences. Part of the program is to learn who has a low level of self-esteem is at higher risk. Kids in foster care systems, kids who are runaway kids, kids in immigrant populations, kids who are homeless, kids who are LGBTQ+ all are much much higher-representers in this population," Runbeck said.

According to the Washington Technology Industry Association, the three areas with the most sex trafficking are Los Angeles, New York City, New York, and Pierce/King County in Washington. Washington's income level among the states, Columbia said."This is a business. You've got buyers, who are the 'johns,' and sellers, which are the 'vamps,'" Runbeck said.

Buyers in Pierce and King Counties are prevalent and wealthy. According to the Pierce County Sheriff's Association, 12 percent of online buyers are in the technology industry. The peak time for buying sex online is 2 p.m. and there are over 100 websites to buy black-market sex online. In King County, the peak time to buy sex online is 3 to 4 p.m. Buyers in Pierce and King Counties are the 'pimps,'" Runbeck said.

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University attempts resuscitation of Arabic program

By Marcelle Rutherford

Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound (ASUPS) is the student government organization here on campus. At the end of last semester, Amanda Diaz ’18, ASUPS president, was elected to a second term by her peers. Throughout her time as president, Diaz’s accomplishments have been impressive, and Diaz reflected on how ASUPS has warmed up to the idea of learning the language itself, Bajwa continued.

“I do hope that Arabic expands into a larger program. I have faith that it could happen because the students in the class really do love Nida and seem to love learning the language,” Bajwa said.

Other students suggest similar inroads, wanting to see a more practical, in-depth program emerge to complement and stretch their time in the class. First-year Anna Garu, another student in the class, said, “Nida is so wonderful. She makes Arabic exciting and even enjoyable. I almost forget it’s supposed to be hard work. I would love to take a 200-level class and we will be able to continue the study of the language.”

On the subject of Professor Kiali, Bajwa continued, “Nida Kiali, as both a teacher and a citizen, is such a fantastic human being. As a professor she truly cares about nurturing and connecting with each and every one of her students, she truly cares about building relationships and seeing them as a language and dispelling Western notions surrounding the Arab world.

“I really appreciate how Nida also connects with her students of color, such as myself, through dialogue and, with one again personally, when she speaks Farsi to me or asks about my heritage,” Bajwa said. If students don’t have second-language classes, they certainly demand more of Prof. Kiali.

“The attitude between Kiali and her students is well-displayed,” Diaz said in her interview, Kiali expressed her love and respect for her great group of students, noting their near-perfect attendance and general success in an understandably demanding language class.

“I’m very passionate about Arabic as an American student,” Diaz said. “I see a great opportunity to grow the program and grow my career as well,” Kiali said, and this vision is well-placed and well-displayed.

“I am an Arab myself. I am a Palestinian who grew up in Israel. As a minority, I have been noticing that language is not as appreciated as it should be. For me, language actually brings people together — we learn and know each other through language. I think we enhance empathy and understanding that’s how people understand and connect,” she concluded.

By Isaac Sims-Foster

Nida Kiali was hired as a professor at the beginning of this school year and teaches Arabic 101 and 102 here at the University of Puget Sound. She has the intention of restarting the Arabic program this year, but the likelihood of that happening is uncertain.

While multiple classes regarding Islam and Middle Eastern culture exist in the sciences and non-science departments, Arabic language classes have had a hard time finding footing within the Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound, especially after the previous professor left the position abruptly.

“I was inspired to learn Arabic since I want to work in the Middle East after graduating, and speak a good Arabic of both the Arabic and Farsi which have a lot of similarities to Arabic as a language,” Saihaj Bajwa, sophomore currently enrolled in Arabic 102, said. “I took Arabic last semester for the first time since we didn’t have a professor who could teach it last year. Both semesters have been pretty fun, both in terms of the knowledge that I’ve been able to acquire and the experience of learning the language itself,” Bajwa continued.

“Building communities is extremely important. To take our programming or other events that can cultivate a more inclusive and welcoming community that ASUPS should be fostering,” Diaz said.

Diaz went on to note that the location of the ASUPS offices on the second floor of Wheelock separates the government from the campus. For physically disabled students, it is incredibly difficult to access. Diaz explained that ASUPS representatives tried to be more physically present at community events on campus in order to foster a deeper student connection.

Students reflected positively on Diaz’s presidency as well, noting the second-year political science major’s accessibility.

“I think Amanda Diaz has done a great job as ASUPS president. In my three years here, I don’t think ASUPS has ever felt as accessible as they’ve felt this past year,” Lindsey Hunt ’19 said.

Diaz reflected positively on her time in the position. “We have been able to do a lot of symbolic statements. Some of those examples are, we’re trying to pass a resolution in the senate acknowledging the fact that [The University] is on indigenous land, or a resolution supporting Black Lives Matter,” Diaz said.

In her advice to the next ASUPS President, Diaz highlighted the importance of thinking equitably. She emphasized giving proportional support to different student groups on campus who haven’t been supported in the past and might need more attention than others.

As spring semester gets underway, ASUPS is preparing to buckle down on the remainder of their goals before the end of the next round of officers are voted in. Students who are interested in running for ASUPS positions can pick up election packets from the offices on the second floor in Wheelock.
The legalization of the profession has the potential to lead to a safer sex trade industry with less violence and health problems, as well as lessen the stigma around the trade in general. The United States began to criminalize prostitution as early as colonial times and society often viewed it as a pernicious activity against woman, leading to the belief that customers should be held as criminals.

Yet, studies of Austria, Belgium and Denmark since legalizing prostitution have proven that not only does the act and mandating laws have no effect on treating all participants as criminal offenders, have immense potential to create a safer environment for both workers and clients. In 2014 by the National Bureau of Economic Research, an unintentional loophole in Rhode Island state legislation legalized indoor, privatized prostitution from 2004 to 2009. While inadvertent, the legalization paralleled with a 31 percent decrease in reported rapes and a 39 percent decrease in female gonorrhea reports statewide.

The term “victimless crime” is often applied to prostitution. While female prostitutes can become victims of assault and harassment, criminalizing the partakers is not a probable solution to making the profession safer. When carried out as a consensual transaction as intended, sex work does not promote any justifiable illegitimate activity. According to a 2012 poll on harvardscope.com, there are roughly 13.8 million prostitutes in the world. In the United States there are an estimated 1 million prostitutes, and 9.1 percent of men in the United States reported to have paid for sex with a prostitute in their lifetimes. Needless to say, society would be better served by addressing the working toward legalization seems like the most realistic path of reform to eliminate the significant flaws within the sex work industry.

Legalization of prostitution is not to be confused with simple decriminalization, as that would have too little regulation and could potentially breed more human trafficking rings and dangerous activity. Both sex with minors and sexual trafficking — defined by sharedope.org as “the use of force, fraud, or coercion to cause a sexual act” — would still remain criminal offenses.

People tend to embrace the stigma around prostitution because sex workers can be too ashamed or embarrassed to make their professions public. As a result, the most widespread stories and experiences of prostitutes are often the more negative, gruesome tales. This leaves little room for exposure to more ideal and responsible experiences, and often prevents people from seeing any reason to regulate and legitimize the industry. Additionally, many sex workers tend to stray away from seeking medical care when they are in need due to fear of admitting their professions and facing judgment or attention of law enforcement. The struggle faced by the women on the streets parallels the struggle faced only the day before, and then the day after from law enforcement and siphons tax dollars from citizens. Criminalization also leads to arrests, fine and imprisonment for people who have oftentimes done nothing more than partake in the sex trade. Regarding the legal advantage of sex workers, decriminalization paired with legalization would set labor standards and regulations intended to prevent or diminish any foul play.

The war on the sex trade parallels the war on drugs, in that it requires effort from law enforcement, including ICE officers, and the prevention of deportation or a DACA student whose tuition costs rise of personal emergency, such as a family member facing deportation or a DACA student whose tuition costs rise after the program’s termination. Diaz says that this plan was not well-received by administration.

The revised proposal suggested an open to all, but with priority given to low-income students. ASUPS suggests the fund be administered through the Center for Intercultural and Civic Engagement (CICE), which has the resources and experience in developing programs that support our most vulnerable students. The proposal has demanded our campus actively resist the inhumane immigration justice, may or may not agree with what they’re doing. We must do better. The more we fight to ensure the safety of our undocumented students, the better prepared we are to face the challenges that we claim to be.

In a report issued in July 2014 by the National Bureau of Economic Research, an economist at the University of Massachusetts, for instance, documents that the elimination of prostitution is associated with a significant decrease in female prostitution, and a significant increase in male prostitution.

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The lack of student input and the somewhat randomly-distributed and inexpensive funds to cover any lost tuition subsidies after DACA collapses, and ‘centralizing undocumented students’ voices’ are changes Diaz deems necessary to ensure the safety of all Puget Sound students.

Diaz says anyone feeling unsafe right now can contact her anonymously with any concerns.
The Happy Trail is the Trail’s weekly sex column that seeks to inform the community on issues related to sexuality and gender by addressing these topics in an education-based way. Our mission is to make the campus a safer place by normalizing and destigmatizing topics like safer sex practices, donation and polyamory, while reducing violence, gender inequalities and intersectionality. Happy Trail correspondents are not medical professionals, if you have a medical concern contact CHWS or a local clinic. Otherwise, direct your sexuality and gender questions to nalee@pugetsound.edu. Respond to Happy Trail articles in the form of a letter to the editor sent to trail@pugetsound.edu.

Nayla’s Tinder tips
By Nayla Lee

These days, everyone and their mother has an opinion about Tinder. Dating can be a tricky game on its own, and a lot of people feel nervous or uncomfortable bringing in a digital aspect.

The following was the loose list of rules that I had for myself during my second short phase on the app.

Tw itter.

- If you’re hankering for the over-thought opinions of a straight person, or a fun activity to spice up sleepovers. But if you’re bashking for the over-thought opinions of a straight cis woman looking for a big spoon to fart into, then read on.

- YOUR PICTURES

  - The first picture should never be a group shot! Be bold and clear about who you are.
  - Always fill at least five (preferably all six) pictures.
  - If you’re uploading a picture that’s more than a year old, run it by a friend to get confirmation that it still actually looks like you.
  - A cause shot is a gamble; this would be a photo of you at a protest or participating in a beach cleanup.
  - Make sure it’s a cause you’re actually passionate about, that you would like to have a genuine conversation about!
  - Include one unexpected or unusual picture; this shows off your sense of humor, and also gives matches something to message you about other than just the word “sup”

- YOUR BIO

  - Keep it short!
  - There are three ways to approach it: humorously, being direct about what you’re looking for, or give potential matches something specific to message you about.
  - Include some of your personality!
  - If you’re only looking for a specific group of people (based on gender, sexuality, location, people open to polyamory, a couple/individual for a threesome, people with specific political or moral beliefs, etc.). state it in a clear and polite way.

“Tinder should definitely be used only for good. That means on ego boost, a snazzy way to meet new people, or a fun activity to spice up sleepers. But be sure to recognize why you’re using it. If it becomes too stressful, or puts too much pressure on you, then embrace a different way, or try to up your tech-free time.

When I spoke with University of Puget Sound Religion Professor Hajung Lee about egg and sperm donation, she immediately pointed out that no part of this transaction was free. I knew little about the industry at all — drawing from television plolibers and a deeply ingrained suspicion of corporate reproductive health. On its regulation and consumer impact, Hajung said, “Currently, the U.S. reproductive industry is the wild west.”

We began with the word “donation.” Both parties — donor and recipient — are exchanging money for gametes, whether those come in eggs or sperm. The word “donation” implies a level of emotional detachment that dismisses any subsequent relationship between donor and child, and may otherwise minimize a significant decision. It also signals a sense of altruism that may or may not be present, as money is often exchanged during the process.

Its name, unfortunately, is only the most visible part of the process. There is little accountability and even less accessible, empirical data. However, since the word “donor” continues to be the industry standard, we will use it for the purposes of this article.

In the years following HIV and AIDS awareness, the sperm market has been passed from doctors’ offices to private, for-profit sperm banks which can more readily manage the mass of information and spend time recruiting and testing donors. Many offices are located near college campuses, and are websites that target sperm banks, since they’re assumed to be short on cash and reproductively healthy. Lots of banks require donors to make monthly donations, since it’s laborious and costly to run tests and maintain individual profiles for single samples. Instead, banks amass genetic material from a smaller handful of donors, but are not federally required to track the vials through sale or conception. This means that a single donor could have any number of offspring, which continues to have unmeasured psychological effects on donors.

Egg donation still largely operates on an individual basis, in which intended parents identify the person whose egg they’d like, and they begin a donation cycle which requires several phases of a hormonal drug regimen. The first drug is a gonadotropin-releasing hormone called agonist analogue, which induces a temporary menopause in donors, so that egg maturation and ovulation can be better controlled artificially. The next round of hormones is human menopausal gonadotropin, which is a daily injection that enhances fertility, allows multiple follicles to develop (there’s usually just one per cycle) and more eggs to eventually be harvested. Finally, once the eggs have matured inside the donor, ovulation is induced and egg retrieval takes place within 36 hours.

To retrieve the eggs, the donor undergoes transvaginal ultrasound aspiration. The procedure involves a suction needle on the end of an ultrasound probe, which extends through the vaginal walls and into the ovaries, where it

Scrambled: The lowdown on egg and sperm retrieval
By Emma Holmes

Sperm Whale (not what the article is referring to) PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Egg (not the kind the article is referring to) PHOTO COURTESY OF FREE STOCK PHOTOS

removes the mature eggs from the follicles in each ovary. Patients are monitored in clinic and then sent home to recover. The most common side effects of egg donation are abdominal swelling, ovarian torsion, mood swings and other menopause-like symptoms (weight-gain, vaginal dryness and hot flashes). The most severe of these side effects constitute ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS), which many donors say they’re told is extremely uncommon, with a less than 1 percent risk.

Dr. Diane Tober, a medical anthropologist from the University of California who collects egg donor accounts, disagrees. In her over 90 interviews with egg donors and 180 online surveys, she’s found mild to moderate OHSS to be “quite common,” along with a number of other reproductive health problems donors are experiencing. There is no proof of causation between egg donation and these conditions, which include premature menopause and ovarian cysts. Instead, Dr. Tober warns, there simply isn’t enough research to conclusively know the immediate and long-term risks of egg donation.

For those considering the procedure, websites like www.eggdonor.com and the Egg Donor Information project at web.stanford.edu compile personal accounts and health information in hopes of providing unbiased information to potential donors.

Now it’s time for the big question: how much money do donors make? According to the website eggdonor.com, the median anxious egg donor earns $7,000 per donation. “Providing someone with the chance to become a parent is an amazing and rewarding feeling,” she said. “Egg donation can also help you achieve your own goals. Your decision to become an egg donor is a generous contribution to another woman, but it is also an investment in your dreams,” is printed under a picture of a young woman in a cardigan, holding up a sparkle.

If you produce sperm and you want to make some extra cash, you have options, as well. According to spermbankdirectory.com, “Usually, the range is $35-$50 per specimen. Banks often require a six-month gap between production and complete payment.” This is to ensure that the donor returns for a follow-up blood test.

Egg retrieval is not a procedure exclusive to donors; Couples or individuals who are going through the process of in vitro fertilization (a procedure in which eggs are removed and fertilized with sperm outside of the body, provided either by a partner or a donor) go through the same process. However, instead of donating the retrieved eggs, they are fertilized and re-implanted.

For anyone interested in learning more about the subject, Professor Hajung Lee will be speaking on April 18, from 7-8 p.m. in Thompson 381. The talk is entitled, “Thinking of Freezing/ Selling Your Genes?: Exploring the Reality of Baby Markets.”
Behind the scenes: Meet the custodial workers who keep campus clean and tidy

By Julia Schiff

I found Tina Smith working on the ground level of Anderson-Langdon, in the midst of her daily routine. Smith is a custodial worker at University of Puget Sound, and has worked here for about 15 years. She is employed by Facilities Services along with 32 other full-time custodial workers. Smith got her start in the cafeteria but eventually became a custodial worker for housing, cleaning the various residence halls on campus. Smith is from California, but has bounced around from Oregon to Florida to Washington working in childcare. She has three children and two grandchildren.

“It’s not fancy or anything,” Smith explained about her job. The tone of her voice suggested a sort of pleasant mundanity. One thing Smith lamented is the end of the custodial work-study program. She fondly recalled the days when students would join her in her custodial duties. The relationships she made with those students have stuck with her; some students even referred to her as their “dorm mom.” “I used to remember every student in my building’s name,” she said, a testament to how important students are to her. Now that she works in Anderson-Langdon, she expressed that it is difficult to keep up. “It’s a great place to work; it’s nice,” Smith said about University of Puget Sound, adding that she appreciates the benefits. She took the job out of necessity; it was never her plan to be a custodian but she needed the benefits to help with her husband’s medical needs.

When asked about the challenges of her job, Smith explained that the difficulties are cyclical. In the summer, work is much more strenuous and there is a lot more to do. She expressed that other custodial employees agree with her that summer work is quite a challenge. Smith referred to her former duty of cleaning fraternity houses as a challenge as well, talking about an instance several years ago during initiation when she found feces in the showers. She also recalls a time when one of the houses attempted to make a slip-and-slide in their basement hallway. “They lined it with Saran wrap and took bottles of cooking oil, poured it on the floor and used it as a slip-and-slide,” she said. “There was oil all over the walls and the carpet, all over the stairs, everywhere... It all had to be replaced.”

Maria Garcia and Imelda Cruz also work in cleaning services at Puget Sound, though they are not employed by Facilities, like Smith. Garcia and Cruz work part time cleaning Wheeler Student Center for three hours each night, sometimes longer, depending on the circumstances. Unlike Smith, this is not their only job. Garcia also works at Motel 6 and Cruz has a full-time job at Carl’s Junior. Both Garcia and Cruz are from Mexico. Garcia came to the United States in 1993 in search of employment opportunities. Cruz came to the U.S. in 2005 for reasons similar to Garcia’s. “We have [a] family to feed,” she responded when questioned about what prompted her to come here.

Garcia has three kids, aged 11, 12 and 16. Any free time she has seems to revolve around them. Going through her daily schedule she says she wakes up at 4 a.m., takes her kids to school by 8 a.m., goes to work, picks up her kids, cooks for them, and ends the day cleaning with Garcia. “My kids are [most] important to me,” she said. Cruz’s interests outside of work all pertain to her family; she said she enjoys maintaining her household and taking care of her children. Garcia’s and Cruz’s goals for the future are simple: they want to save money. Garcia is saving to return to California, while Cruz will work and save until her kids have gone through college. Cruz prioritizes education for her children. She has a ninth-grade education while Garcia ended schooling after fourth grade. When asked about what Puget Sound students could do to make their jobs easier they replied that sometimes it takes them longer to clean when students stay too long in the dining hall. They are not compensated for working beyond three hours, yet they are expected to do a thorough job.

An incredible amount of work is put into maintaining the Puget Sound campus. We appreciate the beauty of our school, but not so much the people who work tirelessly to maintain it. People like Tina Smith, Imelda Cruz and Maria Garcia deserve to be recognized for the outstanding work they do on campus. It is those who work behind the scenes who make it possible for our campus to function and thrive every day.

Interdisciplinary hot water study increases environmental awareness

By Kylie Gurewitz

In a study that began the summer of 2017, four Puget Sound students, led by Professors Amy Fisher and Lynnette Claire, embarked on a research project to study hot water usage at the University. Professor Amy Fisher is a part of the Science, Technology and Society (STS) department, and Professor Lynnette Claire is a part of the Business and Leadership department. Several of the involved students are STS majors, but the group includes students studying Business and Leadership, as well as Environmental Policy and Decision Making, and even English. This well-rounded group studied the University’s hot water usage in residence halls and Greek houses by utilizing “citizen science” in addition to community-based social marketing.

The Trail sat down with Shelby Kantner, one of the students on the research team, to find out how this research was unique. This study worked on a volunteer basis, meaning that students recorded their own data. Data collection sheets were left in dorm bathooms for students who wanted to anonymously record the duration and temperature of their showers. These sheets also gave suggestions for the research team to take different kinds of showers, such as turning off the water during the shower, or alternating with cold water. The research team studied the data recorded, as well as the impact of the act of recording the data. Kantner described a survey that was done after the study that showed that even if students did not record every shower, that they were made more aware by having the thermometer and timer there.

“We used both citizen science and community-based social marketing,” Kantner said. “The idea behind citizen science is to get people more involved in the actual data collection.” Getting students involved in the data collection process makes the study more meaningful and encourages them to be part of the research. Kantner also noted the importance of citizen science: “We used it more to bring awareness to how much water consumption, and how much water an individual was using.” Kantner said. By contributing data to the study, students were also informing themselves on their own hot-water usage.

Kantner explained that community-based social marketing works alongside citizen science to break down the barriers to important actions such as taking shorter showers. One of the largest barriers was lack of awareness: “People are largely unaware of how much water they consume, and how hot their showers are, and what that equates to with CO2 release and things like that, and one of the ways to combat that barrier was using citizen science to make them more aware.” So, by recording the time and temperature of their showers, students were more aware of the issue, and took shorter showers.

One of the important takeaways from this study could simply be for the University to install thermometers and timers in campus showers. Like most important issues, awareness seems to be the key to future improvement.
Many seniors have been looking forward to participating in a big production like "Into the Woods" since their first year. Every three years the department rotates among an opera, a musical and opera scenes. This year, it's once again time to put on a musical. And while musicals often are more time-consuming, the actors usually enjoy them more.

The musical "Into the Woods" follows a baker and his wife who want a child, but have been made barren by a witch’s curse. In their attempt to break the spell, their story intertwines with Cinderella, Rapunzel, Little Red Riding Hood and other well-known fairy tale characters.

Nerves were high for first-years and seniors alike as they prepared for auditions and callbacks for the production of "Into the Woods." “Initially I was like, ‘Oh, this will be a breeze. No problem,’” senior music major Danielle Rogers said. “Then I got there and I was like, ‘Oh gosh, I am so nervous.’”

Auditions for first-year students can be even more intimidating than for seniors because they are so different from how auditions are done in many high schools. “There’s something about the high school audition process that is less professional, and this was very professional and that was nerve-wracking,” first-year Julian Aikens-Helford said. “I don’t think I’m ever going to get used to that type of experience.”

In a musical as difficult and lively as "Into the Woods," it can be challenging to portray the characters in a way that does justice to them. In the early stages of the production, actors sometimes feel silly portraying their wacky characters. However, as the show progresses and they begin to stage the show and get costumes, the characters really come to life.

“I think bringing everyone to life and really fully, fully committing and making it believable is going to be the biggest challenge, but I think we’re going to be fine,” Rogers said.

The play is also bringing people together. While many students in the play have been in campus productions before and already know each other, there are new students that decided to try it out. As a senior, Rogers appreciates being able to work with her peers in all class levels. “I think that people are starting to get closer,” Rogers said. “I feel closer to the classes below, the people who haven’t necessarily done a production with the Puget Sound School of Music before.”

Even though the newcomers to the music and theater departments feel some anxiety, they know that they are in a safe place when practicing. “If you just listen to what people are saying, it’s so welcoming,” first-year Michelle Kofman said. “Everyone is really so self-driven and self-motivated, and from that you can bounce stuff off each other.”

The students have already seen the show come together so well, despite being in the early stages of the production. “There’s like two [songs] where everyone’s singing and there’s this crescendo,” Kofman said. “It’s just so eye-opening and humbling to just be able to be one voice in that crescendo.”

Some find that the most rewarding part of a show is the how they feel once they have accomplished it. “I’ve already felt that sense of accomplishment and I think once it’s all put to life and put on the stage with costumes it’s going to be amazing and so rewarding,” Rogers said.
Olympics bring controversy and intrigue to Pyeongchang

By Zachary Fletcher

The wide world of sport converges on Pyeongchang, South Korea this month for the 23rd edition of the Winter Olympic games. Over 90 countries will be represented by close to 3,000 athletes, according to ABC News. Six countries will make their debut during these games, and the winter tournament is set to host a range of events including everything from luge to ice hockey.

According to the LA Times, the United States has one of the highest medal counts in the snowboarding events and is currently third in the World Cup points standings. Richardson has kept up with Shaun White after his return to the scene and is one of the favorites to take home the gold. According to the Times, Richardson has kept up with Shaun White after his return to the scene and is one of the favorites to take home the gold.

One of the most famous athletes to grace the snowboarding stage is American Shaun White. White has two gold medals and has been competing in the winter games since the 2006 Winter Olympics.

I’m looking forward to the alpine skiing; how fast these people go down a hill is unbelievable,” Heyning said. “It’s a time to put aside our differences and come together in a friendly competitive spirit with the world,” Richardson added.

Heyning paralleled those thoughts, but also acknowledged that this sort of cheating wasn’t exactly new to the sporting world.

“It’s good that took a severe action, but at the same time, it’s not really new,” Heyning said. “Having these bans on Russia is daunting but it’s not going to do a whole lot in the long because they’ll be able to get back in,” he added.

Callahan setting records and swimming hard for Loggers

By Tayla MacPherson

Saturday, Jan. 27 was a very special day for sophomore swimmer Kelli Callahan. Aspen, Colorado. Twenty-six years ago, Ronda Blair set the school record for the 200 IM with a time of 2:08.48 and this past Saturday, Callahan broke that record with a time of 2:07.25. Callahan has received several accolades this season, yet this is by far her biggest.

Blair and Callahan have become very close since Blair is the Puget Sound swim teams’ sprinting coach and assistant head coach. Blair mentored Callahan and pushed her to be a better swimmer. Callahan describes the feeling of breaking Blair’s school record: “I think breaking the record this past Saturday was really special and fun for both Ronda and I. As one of my coaches we’ve been both working towards that goal for the past year and half, and at the end of the season draws near we were beginning to expect that I would do it soon. It was super exciting on Saturday when I looked up at the clock and saw that I had finally done it.”

Callahan has been swimming since she was 8 years old and still loves everything about the sport. So far this season, she has been named Logger of the Week twice and named Northwest Conference Women’s Swimming Student-Athlete of the Week. Callahan is described by her coach and teammates as a driven swimmer with high expectations for herself.

Head coach Chris Myhre describes his expectations for Callahan going into the season: “One thing we have always tried to focus on here at Puget Sound is the person’s personal expectations. I believe Kelli places high expectations on herself in everything she does. As for swimming, Kelli has a perfect blend of talent and work ethic that allows me, as her coach, to easily push her towards places very few get to go in...in this case, a place on our record board,” Myhre said.

Callahan and Blair share an embrace after the race

While Callahan broke a school record this weekend, she also won all four of her events against the top team in the conference, Pacific Lutheran University. The other three events she swam included 100-heartstroke, 500-free style, and the 200-medley relay.

Callahan always wanted to continue her collegiate career in college, but was unsure of the level of swimming she wanted to partake in. Callahan’s dad went to Puget Sound in college, but was unsure of the level of swimming she wanted to pursue.

Myhre said, “Throughout history there’s so much violence and so much hatred between countries,” Richardson added. “Heyning added the more enjoyable aspect of competition to his reasoning. “It’s a social event not only for the world but even between friends where you have a good time.”

Callahan decided to visit the school and fell in love with the campus and environment.

Callahan discusses the positives of attending a Division III institution. “The best thing about attending a Division III institution is that you really get out what you put in — you can decide how serious you want to be, and I am very passionate about swimming. I get to balance my academics and athletics and still put a lot of focus in on swimming,” Callahan said.

Not only is Callahan an immensely talented swimmer, but she also is seen as a leader and compassionate teammate. “She is a caring person, sensitive and bright. You should ask her teammates, but my guess is that she is considered a leader, but more by example than her words. Nobody doubts her abilities and her teammates certainly recognize that she is good,” Myhre said.

The women’s team is ranked second in the Northwest Conference and is getting ready to compete in the championships in mid-February.

The globe is set to host the games in South Korea this month for the 23rd edition of the Winter Olympic history. From ice hockey to luge, the Winter Olympic games offer athletes a chance to prove their skill and are a special celebration of worldwide competition that comes only once every four years.
Michigan State faces reckoning over Nassar

By Kevin White

On Jan. 24, Larry Nassar was sentenced to 175 years in prison for sexual assault. Nassar was already jailed in 2017 for child pornography charges, sentenced for 60 years. Nassar committed his crimes as the team doctor for both Michigan State and USA gymnastics, abusing a position of power and trust.

There have been nearly 250 accusations or trials against Nassar. Emma Holmes’ article last issue in the put the number of victims speaking at Nassar’s sentencing at 156. These numbers are staggering, and deserve more coverage. This should stand as one of the worst crime sprees in American history.

Nassar’s crimes also join a long and tangled history of sexual assaults within college athletics. The NCAA has recently been rocked by scandals at Penn State and Baylor. In all cases, no matter who committed the crime (players, coaches, or trainers), the system aided and abetted the crime. It seems that, in these cases, there has been justice, but not rehabilitation. Jerry Sandusky (the perpetrator of the crimes at Penn State) and Larry Nassar were both sentenced to jail. Joe Paterno and Art Briles were forced out of their jobs, reputations forever tarnished. The NCAA has big-name schools all within the same decade, along with a wider conversation about the climate and response to sexual assault by schools, reveals a deep-seated issue on college campuses. And when the issue crosses with Division I sports, an operation that essentially prints money for the schools, there becomes a conflict that oftentimes places profits before people.

Again, we must hope that the arrival of the #MeToo movement in college athletics brings the institutional change needed. Unfortunately, we must depend on this civic action, a cultural phenomenon, where Americans across all walks of life have risen together to reveal a deep flaw in the system and say “no more,” rather than the federal government, which has

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Speculation around Russia investigation erupts after Robert Mueller orders dirty chai at Diversions

By Bean McQueen

On Jan. 31, Special Investigator Robert Mueller visited the University of Puget Sound campus for reasons unknown. Although the full extent of Mueller’s activities on the Puget Sound campus are unclear, concordant reports indicate that he entered Diversions Cafe, ordered a dirty chai and left. An isolated report claimed he was seen tearing up decorative kale and eating it raw. What this means for the Russia investigation is not yet confirmed, but many members of the Puget Sound community consider this move by Mueller to have significant implications.

“At this point in the investigation, a dirty chai is as good as an indictment,” International Political Economy (IPE) major Timothy Turkey said. “I’ve had my share of dirty chai, and clean, and I can confirm it’s a very serious drink. Mueller wouldn’t order one if he wasn’t preparing to bring criminal charges against Trump.”

Erica Shaneley, a witness to the event, claims to have spotted definitive proof of Mueller’s intent to indict Trump. “I was doing homework in Diversions when it happened and I got a look at the cup when he was leaving,” Shaneley said. “The writing on the cup either said ‘16 oz dirty chai w/hemp’ or ‘Trump is guilty of colluding with Russia and I have undeniable proof, so watch our world, everything’s coming up Robert.’ I’m prepared to assume it was the latter.”

Others claim that Mueller’s appearance in Diversions implies the investigation is yielding no concrete evidence of collusion.

“Think about it: Robert Mueller ordered a dirty chai with hemp,” English major Brandon Blue explained. “Hemp ‘leads us to bump’. Bump day. Jan. 31 was a Wednesday. Wednesday ‘sounds like’ ‘one day’.” “One day we won’t even drink coffee, because our stomachs will be external mechanisms outside of our bodies. Bodies, ‘buddies,’ ‘blueberries,’ ... free-associate a little further and you end up with ‘Trump is innocent’. I’m as surprised by this result as the next person; I really thought he was guilty, but ... the proof is in the pudding.”

Another student, Mary Macinbryer, agreed with Blue. “Nobody doing serious work would ever go to Diversions. The fact that Mueller even set foot in there tells us the inves-
tigation is dead in the water,” she said.

There have been rumors that the Diversions employee who took Mueller’s order might have illuminating information — the two talked for over 40 seconds by the Diversions cash register — but when we approached Diversions barista Anabeth Bricks, she declined to provide a statement. It follows logically that she was forced or bribed to sign a nondis-
closure agreement due to the sensitive information relayed to her by Mueller.

“He just ordered a drink. I have to go to class,” Bricks said when pressed.

Bertha Ber, the student who claims to have witnessed Mueller ripping decorative kale out of the ground and eating it immediately, described the incident in detail and gave us their take on its implications.

“It was right before the dirty chai incident, at the little garden by the sign on Alder street. He was pulling them up violently, randomly; sometimes the roots came up and sometimes they ripped at the stem. Some of them he shoved into his mouth even though they were really dirty. A lot of them just got strewn around. I also think he was humming the ‘Friends’ theme song. Pretty powerful stuff — I think, we all know what this means for Trump, the Russia investigation and our nation’s future.”

For a more informed opinion on what Mueller’s appearance means, we went to Lucy Barns, an esteemed scholar of political psychology who specializes in analyzing the behav-
iors of those experiencing great public scrutiny.

“Not my president,” Barns said.

Undoubtedly, the meaning of the dirty chai incident (or ‘Chaigate,’ as some are calling it) will come to light as the investigation unfolds.

Schedules replace questions about break as dominant small talk

By Lee L. Benbow

As the University of Puget Sound approaches the ends of its first month back, big changes are happening. The two-weekend buffer in which students can start small talk with “How was your break?” is definitely over. There are a few stragglers who still cling to the idea of talking about their vacation to Canada or the amazing trip to an aunt’s cottage in rural Iowa, but that time is far gone. We do not have to fear, for in the wake of holiday recaps come the exciting prospects of schedules and weekend plans.

The Flail caught up with a couple students to see how their transition from giving up on their vacation to Canada or the amazing trip to an aunt’s cottage in rural Iowa, but that time is far gone. We do not have to fear, for in the wake of holiday recaps come the exciting prospects of schedules and weekend plans.

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Senior Josh Jackson is having a tough year, but he’s making the best of it. “I am, like, such a busy person, it’s not really fair to myself or others to only tell part of my story. I feel the need to summarize and brush over parts, like my new microwave and the paper I got a B+ in. What can a girl do?” Winer shrugged.

The Flail reported that the small talk they had lasted 15 minutes past the polite five-
minute mark.

“Not all small talk is equal,” Jackson said. “Some one-minute conversations reveal much more than any hour-long dialogue ever could.”

One time I spoke with my roommate, David, and just by the way he said, ‘Boy, today has been awful,’ I knew he had stepped in a puddle and made the rookie mistake of wearing socks and Birkenstocks without waterproofing the socks first.

The Flail wasn’t really sure how one could waterproof socks, but was happy that the conversation was over.

There is a struggle that comes with small talk, there are many unwritten rules that even the most extroverted folk do not notice they have broken. For instance, junior — “but technically a senior due to AP credits” — Amanda Jameson confided in The Flail, “I’ve been broke the rules. Like, asking about your weekend is only okay ‘till Tuesday, and then you ask about your day or classes until Thursday midday, then weekend plans have their moment to shine,” she said.

So much thought goes into the everyday talk that is essentially unavoidable. To seek strategies for avoiding contact, The Flail reached out to the school’s well-known hermit, David. David, who wished that his last name not be printed, denied to be interviewed with a small shake of his head without removing his sneaky pair of airports. How sad.

Moving forward from this article, remember firstly that it is no longer appropriate to discuss what happened in January of 2018, since it is over.

Small talk is a fruit of labor measured in quality, not quantity. Distinguishing this is not an easy feat, but with the help of this article it may be achieved.
The University of Puget Sound acknowledges the Black Panthers

By Matthew Gullick

Last year Bobby Seale stood in front of a packed Rausch Auditorium and recited the poem integral to the creation of the Black Panther Party (BPP). The title of the poem was “Call Me Fulla Lucifer.” In that moment, for that crowed room, past and present fused into one.

Seeking to recapture the power of that moment, the Collins Memorial Library exhibit for spring 2018 is “Louder than Words: A Portrait of the Black Panther Party.”

The exhibit, up from Feb. 1–May 15, showcases various paraphernalia associated with the socio-political black liberation movement. Printer-bound students can peruse a variety of materials on and by the party. The exhibit also includes a poster featuring famous quote, “The Race and Pedagogy Institute sponsored ‘A Conversation with Bobby Seale,’” founding chairman and national organizer of the Black Panther Party. Prior to his formal presentation, the library hosted a reception for students and faculty in the Archives. In this space we had a display of some historical documents and archival materials reflecting the work and people of the Black Panther Party, including Mr. Seale. The event was standing-room-only and created a great deal of interest in the Black Panther Party. We wanted to build on that interest and contacted Mr. Jennings, historian and archivist of the Black Panther Party, about bringing a traveling exhibit to campus. We hope the exhibit will give students an opportunity to reflect more deeply about the Black Panther Party and its legacy in our school’s history,” Ricigliano said.

To some in the Puget Sound community, the BPP may seem remote despite its heavy association with the 1970s and other radical movements of that time. Here, the library offers the opportunity to step back and view the organization and its events through a more contemporary lens. The exhibition has a number of unique items from the 1960s and 1970s, including original photos, buttons, newspapers, and more. The exhibit offers a window into a movement that still resonates today,” Ricigliano explained.

One section of the exhibit deals with the Seattle branch of the party. This display contains some original Party information disseminations specifically relating to the Emerald City. Another portion contains the Black Panthers’ Ten-Point Program, a declaration of the core beliefs and aims of the party.

“We invite students to write their own version of it based on the changes they would like to see in their own communities and post them on the wall,” Ricigliano said.

For inspiration, students can attend a conversation with curator Billy Jennings at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, in the Collins Forum. Hopefully this event can accommodate more audience members than the jam-packed talk by Bobby Seale last year. Incidentally, students who attended that talk may want to check out this exhibit for the portion regarding the party co-founder.

“Louder than Words” brings a crucial part of black American history to Puget Sound in a space accessed every day by students. Known for their incendiary demonstrations and direct action, the Black Panthers have also been known for their emphasis on and myth tinge perceptions of the BPP. This exhibit provides the organization’s message both in their own words and through their representation in popular media of the time. In hosting it, the library hopes to give a sense of the power and potential of the wide range of the Black Panther Party.

Francesca Ricigliano, Associate Director for User Services at the library, played a guiding role in developing the exhibit. “I really love having a nice park kinda area to sit and read in. Wright Park is located about a mile close to campus! I’m a big runner and enjoy doing these fun things for free!”

"I really love having a nice park kinda area to sit and read in. Wright Park is located about a mile close to campus! I’m a big runner and enjoy doing these fun things for free!"
A reaction to the Grammys from someone who stopped caring about the Grammys years ago

By Evan Welsh

We were all rooting for you, Grammys. I have personally sworn off caring about the Grammy awards multiple times, but with many articles preceding the show applauding the awards for addressing racial diversity, it seemed like this might be the year the Grammys did better. Even I took hold of the glimmer of hope that this might be the year it all works out. However, of course, this was not the year; it was a trap. Like Charlie Brown trying to kick the football, music fans convinced themselves this would be the time it would all go according to plan, only to be fooled again.

In doing everything they could to show the world that the Grammys aren’t racist, they forgot not to be misogynistic. You would think in a year when artists are wearing white roses to show their support of the Time’s Up and MeToo movements on the red carpet and Kesha is scheduled to perform with a myriad of other female artists during the show to promote the same, that the Recording Academy might have taken a hint to give some female artists recognition. Unfortunately the Grammys failed to do so and the night unfolded into a mishap I’m sure they wish they could go back and change.

We should have seen the red flags starting to pop up when reports stated that Lorde, the only woman in the Album of the Year category, was not going to perform because unlike all the other male nominees in that category, she was not offered a solo performance. Women were shut out in all but one of the four major categories; Alessia Cara won for Best New Artist, becoming the only female of the evening to win as a solo performer. But women not being awarded in three of the four major categories was not even the most shocking upset of the night, as Ed Sheeran, not in attendance, won for best pop solo performance over Kelly Clarkson, Kesha, Lady Gaga, and Pink.

With so many opportunities to right previous wrongs, the Grammys just couldn’t do it. They couldn’t give Lorde a solo performance even though she was the only female in the Album of the Year category and had exploded with popularity from her album, Melodrama. They couldn’t give Kendrick Lamar album of the year after denying him in two previous years, even despite the fact that he is currently one of the most influential voices in popular music. They couldn’t give Kesha an award after years of public legal battles and writing an album and song about overcoming her traumas and sexual abuse. Even after watching her powerfully perform that same song with a group of women, emotionally moving everyone in attendance, they couldn’t give it to her.

There was of course backlash from people everywhere regarding the gender gap in the awards. A study from USC published a few days before the show went viral after it was found they had reported that only 9.3 percent of Grammy nominees between the years 2013 and 2018 were women.

To top it all off, the president of the Recording Academy had the guts to say that women in music need to "step up" if they want to win awards and have higher positions within the music industry. He later apologized for the statement, but truly, how big of a swing and a miss could the Grammys have taken this year, especially after the publicity around a racially diverse set of nominees and performers? How can the president of the Recording Academy not have the wherewithal, after receiving so much negative feedback, to not double down on disparaging women’s influence and importance in the music community? As a fan of music, the Grammys have always been odd. Every now and then they will surprise with a decision that doesn’t completely miss the mark, but more often than not, the Grammys and their voters prove to be glorified chart-checkers, scouting the Billboard 100 and giving awards to whomever may sit at the top. However this year they seemed like they were even a little tenous on doing that, as displayed by "Despacito" being denied in two major categories, Record and Song of the Year, despite having been unquestionably the most popular song of 2017.

I wish that this were more surprising than it actually is. Hopefully in the future the Recording Academy and its voters will evolve and diversify so that they may actually represent those who are the best of their art form. Maybe in a world that gives access to endless amounts of all art forms such as movies, music, literature, painting and more, we as consumers should stop allowing academies to make decisions on what we hold to be the best of its kind, valuable, or important. So to hell with "there’s always next year"; it’s time we take things into our own hands.